

REPORT

Of the Committee on Revolutionary Pensions, on the subject of fixing an amount of annual income, which shall exclude the applicant from a pension, under the law of March 18, 1818, and May 1, 1820.

JANUARY 12, 1824.

Read, and ordered to lie upon the table.

The Committee on Revolutionary Pensions, to whom was referred the resolution, of the 26th December, instructing them "to inquire into the expediency of fixing, by law, the nett amount of annual income, which shall disqualify any applicant from being placed on the pension list, under the acts of 18th March, 1818, and 1st May, 1820," have had the same under consideration; and

REPORT:

That, by the act of 18th March, 1818, the Secretary of War is authorized to place on the pension list every person who served during the war of the Revolution, in the manner and for the term therein specified: provided, he is in such "reduced circumstances as to need the assistance of his country for support." That, by the supplemental act, of 1st May, 1820, the applicant is required to exhibit a schedule and valuation of his property, in order to entitle himself to the benefits of the act of March, 1818, above mentioned; and it is made "the duty of the Secretary of War, to cause to be struck from the list of pensioners every person who shall not, in his opinion, be in such indigent circumstances as to be unable to support himself without the assistance of his country." The design of Congress, evidently, was to extend the benefits of these acts only to those, whose condition in life, both as to property and bodily infirmity, rendered them dependant on charity for the means of subsistence. Your Committee believe, that this rule has been uniformly observed in their execution; and think it could not, in good policy, be departed from. The rule then being to grant relief to the necessitous only, the Committee are of opinion, that its equal and just operation can only be secured, by trusting its application to the

sound discretion of the Secretary of War. The necessities of the applicant do not depend simply upon the amount of property he has; but, also, on the number of his family; his bodily strength or weakness; and the dearness or cheapness of articles of subsistence in the portion of country in which he lives. Considerations like these, must obviously be referred to the discretion of some one. To fix any amount of property or income as the rule by which applicants shall be excluded, would introduce a principle very unjust in its operation. The incomes of individuals vary, according to their industry, economy, and good management; and the improvident, would be benefitted, while the prudent and industrious might be excluded by such a rule. No amount of property could be adopted as the rule; because, what would be a competent support for one, might be too little or too much for another. The Committee, therefore, believe it impracticable to adopt any rule of valuation which would be just in its operation, or which would not involve great difficulty in its execution; and submit the following resolution:

Resolved, That the Committee on Revolutionary Pensions be discharged from the further consideration of this subject.